



# Position Specification

James Beard Foundation

President & Chief Executive Officer

Private and Confidential

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### Our Client

Dedicated to exploring the way food enriches our lives, the James Beard Foundation (JBF) is at the forefront of America's culinary community. The Foundation's mission is to celebrate, nurture, and honor chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone.

The prestigious culinary arts organization was established in 1986 in honor of James Beard, a cookbook author, television personality, and teacher with an encyclopedic knowledge about food. Beard was a champion of American cuisine and is widely considered "the dean of American cookery." He helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts, instilling in them the value of wholesome, healthful, seasonal, and delicious food.

Today JBF continues in the same spirit by administering a number of diverse programs that include educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships for culinary students, publications, chef advocacy and action training, and thought-leader convening. The Foundation also maintains the historic James Beard House in New York City's Greenwich Village as a "performance space" for visiting chefs.

*The following programs and initiatives encapsulate the Foundation's current work:*

- **Impact Programs:** The JBF Impact Programs are committed to establishing a more sustainable food system through education, advocacy, and thought leadership. From the annual Food Conference to the Leadership Awards and Chefs Boot Camp for Policy and Change, the Impact Programs engage key stakeholders across the culinary community in the conversation about what constitutes a good food system while building a constituency of advocates to influence food policy at the local, state, and federal levels, and providing clear and effective ways for the culinary community and consumers to take action.
- **James Beard Foundation Awards:** In 1990 the James Beard Foundation made another leap forward by establishing the James Beard Foundation Awards for excellence in the food and beverage and related industries. By shining a spotlight on the people behind the food we were learning to appreciate and enjoy, the James Beard Awards preempted the era of the celebrity chef we now take for granted.
- **James Beard House:** In 1986, the James Beard Foundation officially opened the James Beard House "to provide a center for the culinary arts and to continue to foster the interest James Beard inspired in all aspects of food, its preparation presentation, and of course, enjoyment," according to a press release issued that day. Today the Foundation hosts more than 250 events at the Beard House annually, maintaining Beard's home as an important meeting place for America's food community.
- **Scholarship Program:** Throughout its history the Foundation has supported the culinary arts in a variety of ways. The Foundation's robust scholarship program has distributed more than \$7 million in cash awards and tuition waivers to talented culinary students in need of funds to pursue their education.

- **Educational Programming and Convening:** The Foundation’s educational programs—which take the form of conferences, festivals, tastings (i.e. Taste America), lectures, classes, and workshops—have helped educate thousands of people about food and its centrality in modern life and health.

As an organization, the James Beard Foundation has evolved beyond the scope of influence any one person could have had, but all the while keeping true to the ideals that James Beard professed—that is, emphasizing the importance of simple, wholesome food, good cooking, and good eating by educating, mentoring, supporting, and caring for the people who prepare and enjoy it.

With an annual operating budget of \$12M, the organization is poised to sustain profound impact across its next era of leadership.

More information about the James Beard Foundation can be found online at [www.jamesbeard.org](http://www.jamesbeard.org).

## **The Role**

Reporting to and working with the Board of Trustees, the President has responsibility and is accountable for the strategic, programmatic, financial, and management operations of the James Beard Foundation.

*The President will:*

- Provide strategic leadership, fostering an environment for excellence, execution, creativity, convening, and inspiration;
- Continue to grow the organization, and its programs and networks, while abiding by the late James Beard’s championing of American cuisine.
- Weave the Foundation’s programs (current and future) into a coherent narrative that is larger than the sum of its parts thereby enabling the organization to continue to educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts while instilling the value of wholesome, healthful, and delicious food;
- Communicate the Foundation’s mission and the direction of the organization to multiple stakeholders, including funders and partners; and
- Ensure that governance, asset management, and programs are ethical, transparent, aligned with the Foundation’s values and aims, and led by dedicated, diverse, and creative staff.

*Specific responsibilities include:*

**Provide vision and focus for a dynamic organization.** JBF is an iconic and highly motivated organization with activities occurring simultaneously in many locations and on a variety of issues, with a unique combination of professional staff, volunteers, allies, board members, donors, and partners. The President must be able to inspire, motivate, coordinate and honor these multiple constituents in ways that advance the mission of JBF and maintain the highest standards of service and integrity.

**Lead the development of impact programs that positively affect food culture, as well as shift public opinion.** JBF's next President will continue to build upon the dynamic impact programs and tools of the organization such as the educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships for culinary students, publications, chef advocacy and action training, and thought-leader convening. S/he also will push for innovation and the creation of new programs consistent with JBF's strategic plans (Impact Programs and Three-Year Strategic Plan) that will educate and gain a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities that positively affect food and food culture as well as those that would adversely affect the culinary community.

**Manage through change.** The effectiveness of JBF as equal parts culinary arts and social change organization will depend on how well it manages our evolving food culture and opportunities for advocacy - and how nimble it can be in responding to external changes. Managing these changes in ways that keep JBF relevant and central to the movement will be critical for success. The next President will expand into new programs consistent with JBF's mission that place the Foundation as the preeminent national thought leader and driver of culinary excellence.

**Represent and lead JBF in the most positive manner, enhancing JBF's visibility and influencing public opinion.** The President of JBF has the ability to celebrate, nurture, and honor chefs and other leaders in America's food culture, including policy and business decision-makers vital to JBF's mission. It is essential that the new President be able to convey JBF's activities (and those of the broader culinary community) effectively and persuasively to thought leaders and the broader public through a wide variety of communication tools.

**Attract new chefs, members, allies, strategic partners, advocates, donors and volunteers.** JBF continues to grow and diversify its membership, which has helped to expand its impact. The new President must be able to lead JBF in building on its growth by effectively finding new ways to cultivate and activate a thriving network of chefs. S/he must provide thought leadership on food policy and lead the creative excellence and financial success of the James Beard Awards in Chicago while continuing to foster new, beneficial relationships with other major food cities. S/he must be skilled in coalition building, working in partnership with other food movement organizations to enable a more delicious, diverse, and sustainable food culture for everyone. The President will partner with the Board to establish and grow an endowment to help sustain the expansive work of the foundation in the food industry.

**Build, maintain and continually inspire a work environment to achieve the highest standards of performance and accountability.** One of the hallmarks of JBF is to assure excellence, integrity, diversity, and community. JBF strives to attain those goals with its own employees by fostering a workplace that welcomes and embraces diversity and encourages teamwork and mutual respect. The new President must not only embrace these values, but continually lead in creating an atmosphere that promotes teamwork, responsiveness, diversity, accountability, and professional development— and helps the organization adapt to changing and disparate needs within the community.

## Candidate Profile

The James Beard Foundation is seeking a highly differentiated leader with a credible, enduring, and searching passion for food and food culture, and practical experience with the nonprofit, academic, business, sectors. S/he will bring demonstrated leadership and intellectual versatility. The President and CEO will be a person of intelligence and deep curiosity, whose professional experience and personal characteristics will inspire confidence and respect among the Foundation's constituencies. In addition to exhibiting clear management acumen, this person must be a visionary leader with the ability to become a passionate advocate for the culinary community in all its forms.

The successful candidate will have demonstrated accomplishments in developing a strategy for an organization, building the financial and institutional support for its implementation, and skillfully balancing the needs of multiple interests. S/he must possess the business skills, management, and leadership experience needed to lead the Foundation into the future.

*In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:*

**Passion and Shared Values:** The successful candidate will have a passion for celebrating, nurturing, and honoring chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. At its heart, JBF is about making a difference in our diverse culinary heritage through programs that educate and inspire. The successful candidate will not only have earned the appropriate leadership credentials across their career, but be implicitly anchored by JBF's core values.

**Strategic Vision:** The successful candidate must be able to set strategic direction for the Foundation, prioritize and define clear goals for staff, and manage performance toward achievement of those goals. S/he will be a strategic thinker who will work with JBF's senior staff and Board of Trustees to establish plans and methods to achieve its mission while providing the strategic direction necessary to evolve the organization. S/he will be capable of working with others to develop differentiated strategies with multifaceted approaches to address disparate audiences, interests, and cultures.

**Leadership:** In addition to the critical, externally-focused competencies, the successful candidate must possess outstanding leadership skills that will enable him/her to oversee the management of a growing network and constituency-focused organization with highly complex operations including simultaneously occurring events and convenings, as well as the day-to-day management of the JBF restaurant at the Beard House. The President will have a track record of recruiting, retaining and motivating a professional and highly performing staff. S/he will be an inspirational leader to the staff, and encourage openness, transparency, and mutual respect. Further, the candidate must have the leadership and interpersonal skills to harness the power of an engaged, high-octane Board, nurture an unparalleled network of chefs and other food industry leaders, as well as leverage the energy of a dedicated, diverse, and growing constituency including the expansion of the Chef Action Network and the Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership Program.

**Communication and Development Skills:** The successful candidate will be an inspiring and persuasive communicator who can articulate JBF's vision and direction effectively through mass media (while specifically strengthening and growing the Foundation's editorial and social media programs), public speaking, writing, networking, fundraising and one-on-one discussions. S/he will have the ability to connect with and secure results from world leaders, government policy-makers, corporate leaders,

partners, donors, Board Trustees and staff. S/he will fundraise and create strong donor development relations to support the organization's programs and lead the establishment of an endowment sufficient to financially ensure the future success and viability of the Foundation. S/he will also oversee the effective collaboration with the Foundation's numerous current and potential strategic partners.

**Interpersonal Acumen:** The successful candidate must be a person of the utmost personal and professional integrity with a high level of energy and implicit spirit of generosity. Candidates must possess the right combination of self-confidence balanced with humility and a healthy sense of humor. The successful candidate needs to be gracious in manner and comfortable in any situation. S/he will be confident enough to hire and retain strong, smart people, and possess an understanding of his/her own strengths and weaknesses.

**Judgment:** The successful candidate will have the demonstrated ability to make timely and clearly communicated decisions and take appropriate risks to achieve results. Likewise, s/he will be thoughtful about deploying the organization's budget in a way that maximizes outcomes aligned with JBF's strategic plan and core institutional values while managing risk. S/he will listen to and learn from key stakeholders inside and outside of the organization and will be an inclusive and independent thinker who can manage ambiguity and devise solutions even when a clear path is not evident.

## **Contact**

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search and prospective candidates are invited to contact RRA directly at [JBFCFO@russellreynolds.com](mailto:JBFCFO@russellreynolds.com). All inquiries and discussions will be strictly confidential.